

Whitcomb Cabin
BZ Corners - Glenwood County Road
Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Glenwood Vicinity
Klickitat County
Washington

HABS
WASH,
20-GLEN.W.
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service, Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WHITCOMB CABIN

HABS No. WA-179

HABS
WASH,
20-GLEW.V,
1-

Location: BZ Corners-Glenwood County Road
Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Glenwood Vicinity
Klickitat County
Washington

U.S.G.S. Camas Prairie Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
10.629500.5088060

Present Owner: Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Box 5
Glenwood, Washington 98619

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: None.

Statement of Significance: The Whitcomb Cabin is historically significant as the last pioneer log home remaining in the Conboy Lake (Camas Prairie) area and one of the last in Klickitat County. Architecturally, it exemplifies careful log building methods common to European builders and was carefully finished for permanent occupancy. The cabin symbolizes the history of settlement and agricultural development of the Camas Prairie area. It has the potential to convey significant information about early living conditions, pioneer technology, and rural housekeeping in this area in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The original log structure was built circa 1876, since Klickitat County records show that Stephen S. Whitcomb homesteaded at Camas Prairie on 5 October 1876. He served as postmaster for the community of Fulda from 8 October 1877 to 5 July 1881, with the post office located in his home.¹

2. Architect/Builder: Not known. Stephen Whitcomb is assumed to have designed and built the house, subject to better documentation.

3. Original and subsequent owners: Homestead Certificate No. 1319 describes the property as the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter, the south half of the northwest quarter, and the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 8 in Township 5 North of Range 12 East of Willamette Meridian in Washington Territory containing 160 acres.

References to the Chain of Title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Assessor/Auditor, Klickitat County Courthouse, Goldendale, Washington.

1886 Homestead Certificate No. 1319, final certificate signed 10 September 1886. U.S.A. to Stephen S. Whitcomb.

1888 Homestead patent issued 29 September 1888.

1891 Deed, 1 May 1891, recorded in Volume G, p. 497. Stephen S. Whitcomb to John N. Cole.

1894 Certificate of Purchase No. 2762, 16 June 1894, recorded in Volume 4, p. 131. U.S. to Stephen S. Whitcomb, filed by John N. Cole.

1911 Deed, 25 May 1911. John N. Cole to Frank F. Eastman.

1917 Mortgage release, 16 June 1917, recorded in Volume 41, p. 370 and Volume 29, p. 79. John N. Cole to Frank F. Eastman.

1930 R/W easement, 17 June 1930, recorded in Volume 67, p. 638. Frank F. Eastman to Pacific Power and Light.

- 1936 Deed, 31 March 1936, recorded in Volume 73,
p. 366. Susan Eastman to Clyde Eastman.
- 1947 Deed, 20 February 1947, recorded in Volume 99,
p. 121. Susan Eastman to Clyde Eastman.
- 1951 Deed, 27 June 1951, recorded in Volume 109,
p. 367. Clyde Eastman to Pauline Lander.
- 1951 Deed, 16 July 1951, recorded in Volume 109,
p. 427. Pauline Lander to William Keller.
- 1956 Deed, 27 July 1956, recorded in Volume 122,
p. 23. William Keller to Keith Keller.
1966. Deed, 6 October 1966, recorded in Volume 143,
p. 292. Keith Keller to U.S.A.

4. Alterations and additions: The Whitcomb Cabin appears to have been built in three distinct phases. The original structure, with a possible back porch on the north side, was built circa 1876. The early introduction of interior finish occurred circa 1898 and the later interior finishing and addition of a frame construction kitchen section occurred about late 1910's or early 1920's. The approximate dates of alterations and additions are given by the use of newspapers to line the inside surfaces beneath the later finishes.²

The evidence of framing indicates that the roof structure was rebuilt and double run sash windows and paneled doors were installed during one of those later periods. This later construction is characterized by the exclusive use of wire nails.³

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service installed a sheet steel roof on the main cabin in 1975 and on the kitchen addition in 1986.

B. Historical Context

Stephen S. Whitcomb (1823-1908) came to Oregon in 1840 and moved to Camas Prairie around 1876.⁴ He

¹Penny Collier and Bill Collier, Along The Mt. Adams Trail, Hood River, OR: Maranatha Press, 1979, p. 283; Theo J. Kaczka, "History of Glenwood: 1872 to 1951," Kinzua, OR: 1951, p. 1.

²Gregg Olson and Alfred M. Staehli, AIA, "Stephen S. Whitcomb Cabin, Conboy Lake NWR, Condition Survey and Preservation/Restoration Recommendations," 1986, p. 2.

³Ibid.

⁴Klickitat County Agriculturalist, (Goldendale, WA) 2 January 1909.

was one of the earliest settlers in the area. He helped establish the town of Fulda (named after a town in Germany located about 55 miles northeast of Frankfurt) and served as the first postmaster, with the post office located in his home, from 8 October 1877 to 5 July 1881. The Fulda post office served an area east of Laurel and south of Glenwood. James O. Shaw took over as postmaster in 1881 and moved the post office to his home. Each subsequent postmaster moved the Fulda post office to his home, so it had seven different locations. It was discontinued on 31 July 1912, with all mail then going to Laurel.⁵

The Territorial Census of 1880 shows Whitcomb to apparently be a single man. Also, in September 1880, a log schoolhouse⁶ known as the Whitcomb School, was built near Fulda.

Stephen Whitcomb moved to the nearby community of Gilmer in 1888 and married Elizabeth Westover Bradshaw Gilmer, the widow of William Gilmer who had died in 1881.⁷ Whitcomb took over as postmaster of the Gilmer post office for a short period from March 1894 to July 1895.⁸

Meanwhile, John N. Cole married Nancy Hendryx Anderson of Fulda on 10 March 1890 at The Dalles, where Cole homesteaded. In 1891, Cole traded property with Stephen Whitcomb and acquired the Whitcomb house at Fulda.

Stephen and Elizabeth Whitcomb were founding members of the Camas Prairie Pioneer Association on 1 January 1901.¹⁰ Stephen Whitcomb died on 29 December 1908.¹¹

As a historic part of the Camas Prairie area, the occupants of the Whitcomb Cabin witnessed and participated in the growth of agriculture and dairy farming on the lakebed, the forming of the drainage district and construction of the canal to drain the lake, the development of the logging industry, and the establishment of the wildlife refuge.

⁴ Agriculturalist

⁵ Collier, pp. 110-111; Pete May, ed., History of Klickitat County, 1982, Goldendale, WA: Klickitat County Historical Society, 1982, p. 81.

⁶ May, p. 29.

⁷ Agriculturalist; May, p. 208.

⁸ Collier, p. 283.

⁹ May, p. 333.

¹⁰ Collier, p. 266; May, p. 68.

¹¹ Agriculturalist

The changes in the vegetative setting of the Whitcomb Cabin over 100 years testify to the economic history of the area. When the house was constructed circa 1876, it was surrounded by old-growth fir and pine forest, of which the large grand fir tree in the yard is a remnant. This forest was relatively open, with little understory beneath the closed canopy.¹² In about 1895, the first sawmill was constructed in the Camas Prairie area. It used only the best logs, usually the butt end, to produce rough cut and, later on, finished lumber. Another mill was built in the valley in the early 1900's; it moved from one homestead to another as the timber was cut, ending up at Laurel in 1915. In 1918, a large mill was established on Outlet Creek at the east end of Conboy Lake. As a result, most of the forest in the Glenwood Valley has been selectively or clear-cut logged at least once since the 1890's and now is in second-growth stands, including the area around the Whitcomb Cabin.¹³

Meanwhile, cattle and sheep grazing also influenced the vegetative setting. As soon as the first settlers arrived on Camas Prairie, raising beef both for home consumption and for market was an industry. The first sheep were brought to Camas Prairie in 1880, and the numbers peaked at 45,000 animals in 1907. Intensive grazing on open range hindered natural reforestation, converted meadows and grasslands to brushlands, and maintained an unnaturally open setting around the lakebed. Sheep and cattle numbers gradually were reduced following establishment of controlled grazing programs on national forest land, state lands and the timber holdings of private logging companies.¹⁴ Elimination of grazing on the refuge in the mid-1970's has allowed shrub and tree seedlings to encroach around the Whitcomb Cabin and create a more enclosed, forested setting than probably existed over most of the life of the house.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Whitcomb Cabin exemplifies careful log building methods common to European builders. It is a sturdy house which was carefully finished for permanent occupancy.

¹²Kaczka, p. 3.

¹³Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid, pp. 8-10.

2. Condition of fabric: Gregg Olson, historic restoration contractor, and Al Staehli, historic architect, checked the general condition of the cabin's logs in October 1986 by detailed visual examination, drilling with a 3/8 inch bit and sampling of the sections with an increment borer. Moisture meter readings were made along with the sample probings. The highly resinous pine logs were found to be sound and resistant to decay,¹⁵ so the general condition was surprisingly good.

B. Description of the Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The Whitcomb Cabin is a gable-roofed 1-1/2 story log residence with a 1-story frame construction kitchen addition and porch. It is built on a rectangular plan with the main cabin 25 feet long by 17 feet wide, ground floor, and finished attic story. The kitchen addition is 12 feet square, single story.

2. Foundations: Heavy timber foundation and sawn joists are placed on log bolt piers, now badly settled into grade.

3. Walls: The exterior is weathered logs and board siding. Log walls are laid with horizontal 8-inch round barked logs, dovetail notched corners, up to the side eave level, approximately 48 inches above the second floor level and 12 feet above grade. The logs joints are chinked with mortar and stripping. The gables are covered with vertical board and batten siding. The kitchen addition has horizontal clapboard siding.

4. Structural systems, framing: The gables are framed with vertical sawn studs. Stud framing is used for the addition. The ground floor of the main cabin has log pole joists on 24 inch centers. The upper floor has 2 feet by 8 feet sawn joists on 24 inch centers. The roof has 4 inch pole rafters on 24 inch centers.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The side porch on the kitchen addition is a simple shed roof with two boxed column supports. A possible porch existed on the north side of the original structure.

6. Chimneys: A single brick flue is supported on a 2 feet by 4 feet frame platform without a foundation. The flue is made of hard molded salmon colored brick laid in common bond with a firm lime-sand mortar.

¹⁵Olson, p. 3.

Stovepipe openings are provided at each floor and a second one on the ground floor extends through the walls of the cabin and addition. This is a bare metal smoke pipe without fire proofing insulation or shielding. The chimney has been removed at the roof.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Doorways are located at the center of both the north and south sides of the main cabin, and in the southeast and northwest corners of the addition. No exterior doors remain.

b. Windows and shutters: One window is located in the center of the west wall on both the ground and second floors. Two windows are located in the south wall of the ground floor, and one window is located in the east wall of the ground floor facing onto the porch of the addition. One window is located in the center of the south wall of the addition, facing onto the porch. Two windows, side by side, are located in the east wall of the addition. Two windows flank the chimney flue in the east wall of the second floor. Only frames for double hung sash remain.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The gable roof was covered with cedar shakes on spaced sheathing. Shakes have weathered away or been removed. A corrugated sheet steel roof was installed on the main cabin in 1975 and on the addition in 1986.

b. Cornices, eaves: Eaves are boxed and finished.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: Two rooms are located on each floor of the main cabin with 1 inch by 12 inch plank transverse partitions separating them. See measured drawings on pages 12 - 14.
2. Stairways: A 14-riser Ell plan stairway is located in the northwest corner of the main cabin. The stairway has a plain dressed 2 inch by 4 inch balustrade around the upper floor opening.
3. Flooring: The ground floor has 1 inch by 4 inch tongue and groove flooring over 1 inch by 6 inch plank subflooring. The second floor has 1 inch

by 4 inch tongue and groove flooring. The kitchen addition has 1 inch by 6 inch plank flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior is fully finished and ceiled. The ground floor and second floor walls are finished with vertical 1 inch by 4 inch edge and center bead tongue and groove dado with cap trim. The ground floor has 1 inch by 12 inch planked upper wall finish and 1 inch by 6 inch edge and center bead tongue and groove ceiling. The second story has 1 inch by 12 inch planked upper walls and ceiling. The kitchen addition has shiplap ceiled interior.

Interior paneling may have been sealed or stained and varnished, but no painted finishes remain. Plank walls and ceilings have remains of lining paper and muslin, and newspaper, with scraps of wallpaper. The wallpaper is a printed pattern of white beading in 1 inch squares on a gray background with traces of blue and rose.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: A doorway is centered in the partition separating the two rooms on the ground floor, while another doorway connects the main cabin to the kitchen addition. A doorway in the northern third of the partition connects the two rooms on the second floor. The remains of one door, on the second floor, indicate that doors were four cross panel pattern stile and rail type with raised panels, a stock mill made pattern.

- b. Windows: Only frames for double hung sash remain.

6. Decorative features and trim: There are no decorative elements and no other remaining interior or exterior features.

7. Hardware: None.

8. Mechanical equipment: None.

9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Whitcomb Cabin sits on the first bench level above the south side of Conboy Lake (Camas Prairie). It is located about 60 feet north of the BZ Corners-Glenwood county road, and it is oriented east-west, with the front of the house facing south toward the county road.

The land slopes downward toward the lakebed. Chapman and Holmes Creeks and Camas Ditch lie about 1/2 mile to the north. Mount Adams dominates the northwest view across the lake. The site is covered with grass and has one large old-growth grand fir tree to the northwest of the house. Other large fir and pine trees that once occupied the site were logged during or following construction of the house.

Several small springs rise just southeast of the house in a dense clump of young red alder trees at the edge of the county road.

2. Historic landscape design: There are no apparent signs of garden development except for a pear tree near the kitchen porch and another fruit tree, now dead, on the north side of the house.
3. Outbuildings: Two ruins of log construction outbuildings are visible on the site. Both structures are in an advance state of deterioration and convey little sense of their original purpose.

One outbuilding ruin, located northwest of the house, has an approximately 10-foot square floor plan, with 3 feet high walls and the remains of a pole frame gable roof structure. This structure has small openings in the north and south walls suitable for small farm animal use but not humans. It has some remains of riven cedar shake lining and mud chinking.

The other ruin also is approximately 10 feet square, with remaining walls 5 feet high and an opening in the south wall. This structure is adjacent to or over the small stream that drains some of the springs and suggests possible use as a spring house.

The leveled remains of a large building, possibly a barn, are visible on the ground surface.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: None.
- C. Interviews: None.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Kaczka, Theo J. "History of Glenwood: 1872 to 1951."
Kinzua, OR, 1951.

McCoy, Keith. "Preliminary Report of West Klickitat
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N.W.R., Restoration Plan." Portland, OR, 1987.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Collier, Penny, and Collier, Bill. Along the Mt. Adams
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Dalles, OR: Interstate Printing and Graphic Arts,
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Historical Society, n.d.

Preston, Ralph N. Early Washington Atlas. Portland,
OR: Binford and Mort, 1981.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated:

1880 Federal Census, Klickitat County, Washington
Territory.

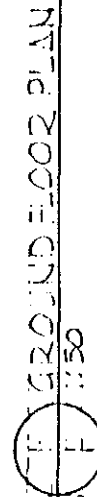
F. Supplemental material:

See pages 12 - 14 for measured drawings of the Whitcomb
Cabin.

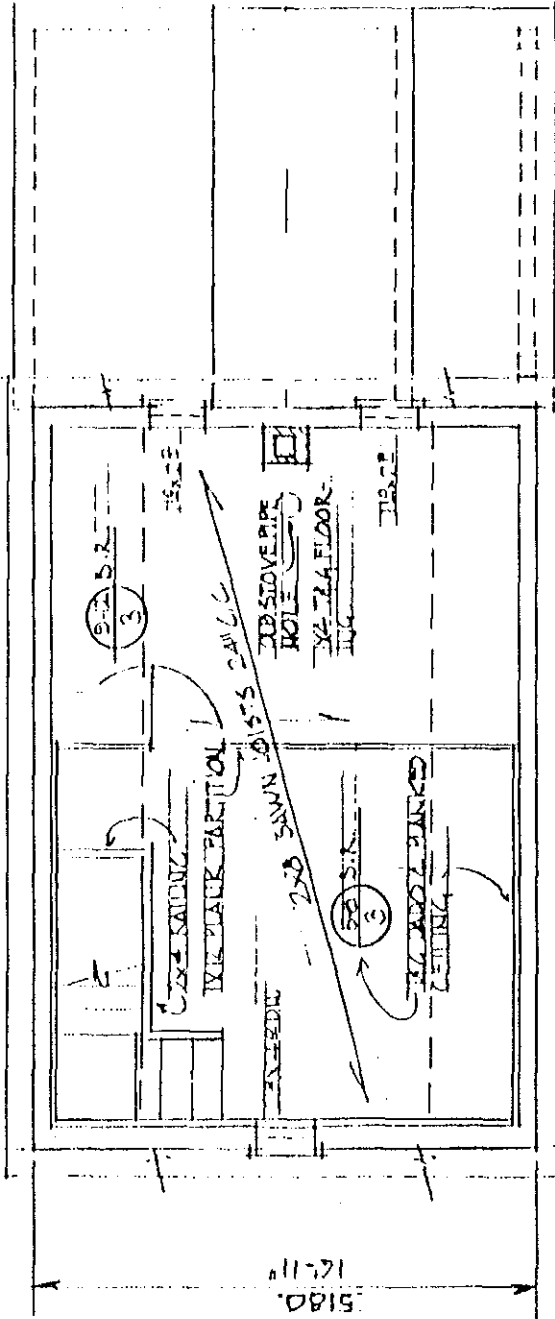
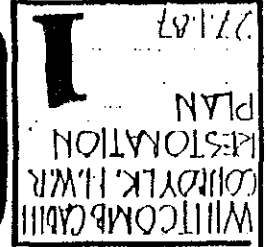
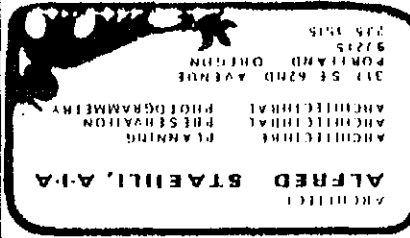
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This is a mitigative recording required by a Memorandum of
Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the
Washington State Historic Preservation Officer.

Prepared by: Susan M. Saul
Title: Outdoor Recreation Planner
Affiliation: Oregon-Washington Refuge District
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Date: July 1, 1987



STEVEN S. WHITCOMB
CABIN, CONBOY LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REF
GLENWOOD, WASHINGTON



2 SECOND FLOOR PLAN
11-00

